

MARGARET K. BRUCE

POINTS COVERED:

SPENT TIME IN NAZI GERMANY AND KNEW SHE WANTED TO

WORK FOR PEACE

TALKS ABOUT FORMATION OF UN AND THE WORK SHE DID

TALKS ABOUT COMING TO LC, INTEREST IN HUMAN

RIGHTS

HOW UN CAME TO LC

IT WAS A TIME OF GREAT OPTIMISM

HELPED PLANT PEACE GROVE OF DOGWOOD TREES ON

CAMPUS

LEHMAN COLLEGE

"LEHMAN COLLEGE, 40TH ANNIVERSARY"

INTERVIEW WITH MARGARET K. BRUCE

CORRESPONDENT: (NOT IDENTIFIED)

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After San Francisco, the U.N. came to London.

And those of us who were working in this area

were seconded and delighted to be part of this new organization.

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And then when I came to the United States and Lehman College was when I really wanted to become more involved in something like human rights. And it was while we were at Hunter College that I became, I think, it was the sixth member of the Human Rights Division of the U.N. Secretariat. I think it was actually at Hunter, now Lehman.

The U.N.-- staff were looking for somewhere to hold meetings. And they'd tried-- I think they tried Connecticut. And they tried other places. But nobody really wanted this bunch of foreigners inflicted on them.

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It was a period where of great enthusiasm, great idealists-- idealistic approaches, great hope for the future United Nations. I still am fairly optimistic, idealistic. But we've got a long way

to go still. Although we haven't had another world war.

I do remember the Security Council, it-- it was-- there were big fights with the Russians particularly. It was the Soviet Union, of course. And on more than one occasion, I think it was Andre Grimeko (PH), the Soviet representative walked out. But he came back. So, it wasn't the sort of serious-- walk out.

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I was investigating the possibility of working on human rights. And initially, the small human rights staff were only about three were headed by a Dutchman who had run an underground newspaper in Holland during the war years. So, he was sort of interested in my background having been in Nazi Germany. And it was he who actually hired me to join his staff when we were at Hunter College.

Roosevelt.

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Well-- at San Francisco, the San Francisco founding conference of the U.N., the-- the-- the results-- I mean, what was being revealed and what had happened at the Holocaust particularly meant that the founders of the U.N. wanted to focus on providing a legal basis for dealing with these horrors. And it was the Latin American delegations in particular that thought we should have an international bill of human rights that would define-- there had been no international agreed definition of human rights in spite of-- history. The U.S. Bill of Rights, the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and the British habeas-- all that kind of thing. But there was no definite agreed definition, international definition of human rights.

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And Panama was one of the leading representatives. And there were several drafts submitted. And in the early days of the commission on human rights, it was discussed should it be a declaration, the bill, ultimate

bill of human rights, should it be a declaration or should it be a legally binding convention which governments would submit to parliament and they would subscribe to change their legislation?

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(COUGHING) Well, Eleanor Roosevelt was the one who pressed particularly to have a declaration rather than a convention. Because she knew that the U.S. Congress, still isn't very fond of ratifying legal instruments. So, she led the-- the discussion to have a declaration.

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It was the British at that time that led the emphasis to have a convention. But then it was a concession of the commission in 1947, I think, where I was present that it was decided that the international bill of human rights would be in three parts, a declaration, a legally binding convention and measures to enforce it. Well, that's how the bill-- began.

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The declaration was adopted relatively quickly

not without an awful lot of discussion and fighting. But it was adopted on ten December 1948. But the convention which was ultimately divided into two separate conventions, one on civil and political rights and one on economic, social and cultural rights. It took until 1966 for those to be completed.

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And it may be of interest that the U.S. has since, rather belatedly but has ratified the international-- it's called a covenant, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. But it has made no sign of wanting to ratify the Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. They're not what the U.S. generally seems to see as enforceable human rights. The-- the category is a little bit different. That's why it was decided to separate them in the end.

END OF TRANSCRIPT* * *